

File

memorandum

Rocky Flats Field Office

DATE: NOV 26 1997

REPLY TO

ATTN OF: AME:ESD:STR:04906

SUBJECT: Status Report on Site Vulnerabilities in Response to the May 14, 1997, Explosion at Hanford's Plutonium Reclamation Facility

TO: Alvin L. Alm, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, EM-1, HQ
Peter N. Brush, Acting Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health, EH-1, HQ

Reference: Memo, Secretary of Energy to Program Secretarial Officers and Field Element Managers, subject: DOE Response to the May 14, 1997, Explosion at Hanford's Plutonium Reclamation Facility, dtd 8/4/97

The Rocky Flats Field Office (RFFO) is providing this status report in response to Secretary Peña's memorandum on the May 1997 explosion at Hanford (referenced above). This memorandum directed field offices to reassess known vulnerabilities and report status to their Program Secretarial Officers and the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health (EH) within 120 days.

From July 14 to 18, 1997, the RFFO conducted an assessment of Hazardous Chemical Management by its contractors and sub-contractors at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (Site). The scope of this assessment included all aspects related to the management of hazardous chemical inventories on site. The assessment covered three major areas:

- Status of contractor corrective actions in response to the DOE Chemical Vulnerability Assessment
- Management of hazardous chemical inventories on Site including process and waste chemicals
- Response to the explosion at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP)

The assessment team concluded that the Kaiser-Hill Company, L.L.C. (Kaiser-Hill), and its subcontractors had taken prompt and comprehensive action in response to the Hanford explosion. The report also documented three findings. A copy of the report, that describes the results and conclusions is attached (see attachment 1). On November 4, 1997, Kaiser-Hill reported to this office that all corrective actions had been completed (see attachment 2 Kaiser-Hill memo). The RFFO is currently conducting a verification of these corrective actions.

Kaiser-Hill has made progress towards the elimination of major hazards on site. Projects to eliminate known vulnerabilities including plutonium and highly enriched

NOV 26 1997

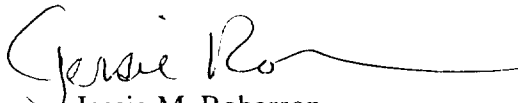
uranium vulnerabilities are proceeding. Corrective Action Plans approved by the RFFO and reviewed monthly are in place for each vulnerability. The RFFO monitors the progress of these corrective actions on a monthly basis (see attachment 3 status reports for October 1997). Additionally, the RFFO audits each corrective action when the contractor indicates a vulnerability is closed.

Kaiser-Hill has nearly completed an inventory of all hazardous chemicals on site. Waste chemicals have already been removed from a number of buildings and either dispositioned or placed into safe, compliant on-site storage. The recently finalized Waste Chemical Consent Order requires that waste chemicals be removed from all buildings by December 1999. In addition, waste chemicals from the nine highest priority groups of buildings must be removed by June 1999. To date, two of these high priority groups have been completed, and a third high priority group is nearing completion.

In addition, the Site has developed a program to expedite the disposition of potentially shock sensitive or explosive waste chemicals. The Site management plan, which was developed in December 1996, ensures that these chemicals are safely dispositioned within fifteen days of identification. The plan includes notifications to the RFFO and regulatory agencies, as well as the RFFO concurrence on management and disposition plans for these chemicals. Since November 1996, approximately 73 containers of shock sensitive or explosive chemicals have been safely dispositioned.

Kaiser-Hill will report to this office by December 8, 1997, on progress towards completion of existing site initiatives as well as additional actions needed to reduce risk and improve safety management. The Kaiser-Hill progress report will be incorporated in the RFFO's report to the Secretary due at the end of this calendar year.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (303) 966-2025. Your staff may also contact David Lowe at (303) 966-6592 or Scott Rogers at (303) 966-6062 to discuss the technical details of this report.


Jessie M. Roberson
Manager

Attachments (3):
Assessment Report
Memo, Hill to Klein
Status Reports

NOV 26 1997

cc w/ Atts:

W. Sato, FM-1, HQ

D. Huizenga, EM-60, HQ

J. Psaras, EM-4, HQ

A. Weadock, EH-24, HQ

R. Warther, DNFSB